

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed on January 27, 2004, pending claims 1 to 10, 12 to 19, 21 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Penso, U.S. Patent No. 3,684,056. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites, in part, a retractable column with at least one section chain, each chain having a plurality of sections pivotably connected to each other, and the chains are positioned in an adjacent manner. At least one chain connection member extends outward from each section and the chain connection members couple to one another to link each section chain to the adjacent section chain to form a rigid column.

The Examiner has recited chain 31 in Penso as being the equivalent of the section chain of claim 1 and hooks 45 attached to the chain as equivalent to the chain connection members of claim 1. However, hooks 45 in Penso are attached to chains 31 in such a manner so that none of the hooks 45 can couple with another hook 45 on an adjacent chain. Chains 31 extend parallel to each other and are separated by a distance greater than the length of hooks 45, making coupling of hooks 45 impossible. No reference in Penso discloses that any hook 45 should engage another hook 45.

In contrast, as seen in FIG. 1b, each section 24 of section chain 22 includes a chain connection member or hook 40 (see page 13, lines 11 to 18, and FIG. 1a) on each side. Note that 42 in the drawings refers to a hook 40 which is rotated to extend perpendicular to section 24 and is also referred to as an offset hook. Each hook 40 of a section 24 of a chain 22 couples with a hook 42 of the corresponding section 24 of the adjacent chain 22.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 1 is not anticipated by the cited prior art. Further, claims 2 to 10 depend from and further limit claim 1, and Applicants submit that for at least the same reasons, claims 2 to 10 are not anticipated by the cited prior art. Reexamination and reconsideration of claims 1 to 10 is respectfully requested.

Claim 12 recites a retractable column with at least one section chain, each section chain including a plurality of sections pivotable connected in a line. Each section includes a first connection member and a second connection member. The section chains are extended from a take up mechanism and positioned so that sections chains are operably coupled by attachment of first connection members to second connection members.

As noted in the discussion of claim 1, above, the cited prior art does not teach that connection members of adjacent chains engage or couple with each other, nor is there disclosure that such coupling is possible or desirable. Without such disclosure, Applicants submit that claim 12 cannot be anticipated by the cited prior art. Further, claims 13 to 19 depend from and further limit claim 12, and for at least the same reasons, Applicants submit that claims 13 to 19 are not anticipated by the cited prior art. Reexamination and reconsideration of claims 12 to 19 are respectfully requested.

Claim 21 recites in part that an apparatus for raising a retractable column include at least one section chain operably positioned so that the section chains may be raised and lower concurrently. The raising and lowering of the section chains acts to couple each section chain to the adjacent section chain to form a column.

Penso, in contrast, never discloses that hooks 45 of adjacent chains 31 ever couple with each other. None of the chains form a column in conjunction with the other chains 31. Connection members or hooks 45 do not extend to engage or couple with other hooks 45 of adjacent chains 31. Without disclosure of connection members of adjacent chains coupling to form a tower, the cited prior art cannot anticipate claim 21. Reexamination and reconsideration of claim 21 is respectfully requested.

Claim 22 recites in part that a retractable column include at least one section chain with a plurality of sections pivotally connected in a line and attached in a manner that they can be rolled up on a take up mechanism. Each section in each chain includes a first hook and a second hook on the opposite side of the section. Each first hook of a section is adjacent to the second hook of a section in an adjacent section chain. The first and second hooks form an interlocking engagement between adjacent section chains, binding each section chain to the adjacent section chain.

Penso, in contrast, never discloses that adjacent chains 31 ever engage with each other and do not form a column in conjunction with the other chains 31. Connection members or hooks 45 do not extend to engage or couple with other hooks 45 of adjacent chains 31. Without disclosure of connection members of adjacent chains coupling to form a tower, the cited prior art cannot anticipate claim 22. Reexamination and reconsideration of claim 22 is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Response After Final, please contact Applicants' representative Alan Stewart at 612.371.5376.

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